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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 281150Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6010

S E C R E T ALGIERS 0537

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, AG
SUBJECT: US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY. ALGERIANS HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO IMPROVE ATMOSPHERE OF US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS THROUGH SUBSTANCE OF OUR DIFFERENCES REMAIN UNCHANGED. IT OUR TURN FOR SIMILAR GESTURES. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE PROSPECT OF NEW ADMINISTRATION BECAME REALITY, BOUMEDIENE REGIME HAS MADE SEVERAL GESTURES SUGGESTING ALGERIAN WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE ATMOSPHERE OF US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS. SPECIFICALLY, GAO HAS:

A. SENT EXTRAORDINARILY WARM MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATION TO PRESIDENT ON HIS ELECTION AND INAUGURATION AND TO SECRETARY ON HIS NOMINATION;

B. REDUCED SENTENCES OF WESTERN COUNTRIES' PRISONERS, INCLUDING US, AS "UNILATERAL GESTURE OF GOOD WILL";

C. GIVEN TOTAL COOPERATION TO VISITING US EXIM BANK TEAM;

D. MADE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE AMBASSADOR PARKER'S HURRIED DEPARTURE, WITH PRESIDENT SEEING HIM TWO HOURS AFTER AMBASSADOR'S RETURN;

E. TAKEN TWO TANKERS OF LNG FROM FRENCH AND DISPATCHED THEM TO US AS "GESTURE OF GOOD WILL" TOWARD US;

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F. EMPHASIZED IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS ANTICIPATION OF POSITIVE EVOLUTION IN US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS AS RESULT OF NEW ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY REVIEWS;

G. KEPT PRESS TREATMENT OF NEW ADMINISTRATION AND OF ITS FIRST MAJOR DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE IN MIDEAST OBJECTIVE AND IN UNCHARACTERISTIC LOW KEY; AND

H. ASKED FOR AGREMENT FOR ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO

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WASHINGTON, THUS MOVING TO FILL POST VACANT FOR NEARLY
TEN YEARS.

3. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THESE STEPS ARE NOT SUBSTANTIVE
AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY STEM FROM CHANGE OF
ALGERIAN HEART OR MIND ON ISSUES WHICH DIVIDE US. STEPS
IN PART REFLECT BELIEF IN HIGHEST GOA CIRCLES THAT NEW US
ADMINISTRATION WILL BE PREPARED TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING AT
CIEC AND PERHAPS ON OTHER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. GUESTURE ALSO
IN PART RELECT RECOGNITION THAT ALGERIAN ECONOMY WILL REQUIRE USG
FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN NEXT FEW YEARS AS ALGERIA
ENCOUNTERS FINANCING SQUEEZE. ADMINISTRATION'S STRESS
ON REDUCTION IN ARMS SALES AND ON PRINCIPLED APPROACH
TO FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES MAY ALSO HAVE ENGENDERED HOPE
THAT DISPLAY OF ALGERIAN RESONABLENESS MIGHT LEAD USG
TO CORRECT ITS TILT TOWARD MOROCCO OVER WESTERN SAHARA.

4. NEVERTHELESS, WHATEVER THE REASONS, GESTURES
CONSTITUTE OPPORTUNITY TO STEP UP RELATIONS TO POINT WHERE
WE CAN AT LEAST AGREE TO DISAGREE HARMONIOUSLY, AS WELL
AS CHANCE TO ENCOURAGE CONTINUED TRANQUILIZATION OF
ALGERIANS ON INTERNATIONAL SCENE.

5. WE SUGGEST USG RESPOND WITH FOLLOWING STEPS TO
HELP MAINTAIN ATMOSPHERE OF CURRENT ALGERIAN REASONABLENESS:
A. EXPEDITIOUS AGREMENT FOR ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR;
B. MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY TO BOUMEDIENE INFORMING
LATTER OF STATUS OF MIDDLE EAST MOVES (LETTER NEED NOT
BE IN-DEPTH REPORT -- COULD BE DRESSED-UP VERSION OF
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SECRETARY'S DAMASCUS PRESS CONFERENCE);
C. MESSAGE FROM SCHLESINGER TO MINISTER OF INDUSTRY
AND ENERGY ABDESSELAM ASSURING ALGERIANS OF HIGH-LEVEL
ATTENTION TO ALGERIAN REQUEST FOR FPC ACTION;
D. VISIT BY UNDER SECRETARY COOPER TO RESUME DIALOGUE
WITH ALGERIANS OVER CIEC;
E. EXPEDITIOUS NOMINATION OF NEW AMERICAN AMBASSADOR
TO DEMONSTRATE TO ALGERIANS OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN THEM
AND TO SMOOTH FEATHER RUFFLED BY AMBASSADOR PARKER'S
SUDDEN DEPARTURE FOR BEIRUT. (ALGERIANS UNDERSTAND WHY
AMBASSADOR PARKER HAD TO LEAVE SO QUICKLY BUT
SOME RESENT IT BECAUSE IT CREATED IMPRESSION THAT
US DID NOT ATTACK GREAT IMPORTANCE TO IT RELATIONS
WITH ALGERIA.)

6M WE DO NOT SUGGEST THESE GESTURES WILL HAVE GREAT
SUBSTANTIVE IMPACT. IDEOLOGICAL AND PRAGMATIC
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US TOO DEEP. WE DO SUGGEST THAT

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BY CONVEYING IMPRESSION USG DOES VALUE ITS ALGERIAN CONNECTION THESE MOVES WILL PROMOTE MORE CILIL ATMOSPHERE WHICH IN TURN WILL HELP US OVER INEVITABLE ROUGH SPOTS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770068-0724
Format: TEL
From: ALGIERS
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Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
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Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
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Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
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Review Media Identifier:
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3339732
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, US, AG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/63e0f5c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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